

**A  
CENTURY  
OF PROGRESS**



***Local History  
of  
Sheldon, and Iroquois County,  
Illinois***



Compiled and Arranged  
by  
REV. ELMER FOWLER

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## FOREWORD

"See America First" is a good slogan for Americans. It is equally important that every citizen should know his own community. There is fact, legend, tragedy and lore connected with every community that should be preserved for succeeding generations. With this purpose in mind, "The Century of Progress" was given as an address in the United Brethren Church, by the writer, Sunday, June 21, 1936.

There were a number of requests that it be put in a permanent form, and in order to comply with these requests, this booklet is offered to the public.



## *A Century of Progress*

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"One hundred years . . . A wilderness here;  
Man with powder in his gun, went out and got the deer.  
Things have changed . . . and on a different plan—  
The **dear** with powder on her face goes out and gets the  
man."

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It was a little more than one hundred years ago when the first white settlers began to make their appearances in this part of the state. Our grandsires were struggling to establish themselves in this Great West. The streams were unbridged; roads were not established; the forest uncleared; the swamps and prairies undrained. Pioneer settlers were crossing the mountains from the east, or were driving through from Kentucky and Tennessee in covered wagons. They were struggling to conquer the forest, prairie and swamp to establish homes in this Great West.

### SUCKER STATE.

There are two explanations of the sobriquet, "Sucker," as applied to the people of Illinois. Many settlers came from Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. They were mostly poor people, unable to own slaves and many of them were in sentiment opposed to slavery, and were seeking a country where slavery did not exist. Southern Illinois was principally settled by these people, who, with their families, penetrated the wilderness, with all their household goods on pack animals and themselves on foot, depending on their trusty rifles and fishing rods for sustenance by the way. They were emigrants from the poorer classes of the slave states, and being unable to own slaves came to Illinois to get away from the domination of their wealthy neighbors. The tobacco plant has many sprouts from the root and main stem which, if not stripped off, suck up the nourishment and destroy the staple. These sprouts are called suckers, and are as carelessly stripped from the main stem as the tobacco worm itself.

These poor emigrants from the slave states were jeeringly and derisively called "suckers" because they were asserted to be a burden to the people of wealth; and when they removed to Illinois they were supposed to have stripped themselves from the parent stalk and gave way to perish in the wilderness, like the suckers stripped from the tobacco plant. But we wear the title proudly now, for "the stone rejected by the builders has become the chief stone of the

corner." In intelligence, morals, material prosperity and population, Illinois has far outstripped the mother states. The cognomen was misapplied. Slavery was the sucker from which they fled and the subtle crops of suckers and miners that sucked the life-blood from the states from which those earlier settlers of Illinois emigrated.

There is another accepted sobriquet of "suckers." Lead was early discovered in the vicinity of Galena, and in 1824, Colonel James Johnson of Kentucky went there with a party of miners and opened a lead mine about one mile east of the present city of Galena. Others followed in great numbers. The people of southern Illinois ran up the Mississippi in the spring season and worked the lead mines during the warm weather, and ran down the river in the fall, thus establishing the similitude between the migratory habits of the finny tribe known as suckers that ran up the stream in the spring and back down again in the fall.

These legends fit the one into the other, and both have something of a basis in fact. A little later a trail was established known as "The Sucker Trail." This trail ran from the southern part of the state through Decatur and Bloomington and crossed the Rock River at Dixon on to Galena.

#### STILL ANOTHER.

There is another explanation that is sometimes advanced and has even found its way into print. According to this story the name "Sucker" was applied from the custom of early plainsmen using straws from the prairie blue stem with which to suck water from crawfish holes to slake their thirst. But this story does not seem quite so plausible as the one above recorded and it is more probable that this last story has had its origin from the fact of the name "Sucker" rather than such custom having established the name.

#### GURDON S. HUBBARD.

The history of Iroquois County can not be written without giving a large place to Gurdon S. Hubbard. He led the very vanguard of the white civilization to this part of Illinois. He was born in Vermont in the year 1802. His father was a lawyer who, having lost all his property in an ill-advised speculation, moved his family to Montreal, Canada. There, to help the family to maintain a mere existence the boy turned peddler, buying from the farmers the remnants of



loads of produce and peddling it through the town. He began with a capital of 25 cents, which he borrowed from a neighbor. This capital was increased to \$100 in one winter's time. In 1818 when only sixteen years of age he was employed by the American Fur Company which was sending an expedition into the West. With this expedition he reached the present site of Chicago early in October of that year. It was then known as Fort Dearborn. Mr. Hubbard gives this description of Chicago at that time. "A house of hewn logs stood some twelve hundred feet from the road. On the edge of the river east of this house stood a storehouse of round logs owned by the American Fur Company. These with two other cabins comprised all the buildings then within the present limits of Cook County. The nearest post office was Fort Wayne, Indiana. Mail was received once a month and was usually carried by soldiers who made the journey on foot." This was the beginning of a long life filled with adventure, romance and hardship. He had the real pioneer spirit and his name is connected with many localities in this eastern part of the state.

August, 1821, Mr. Hubbard with his faithful associate, Noel Vasseur, established a trading house a short distance east of the mouth of Sugar Creek in what is now West Watseka. This building stood within the limits of what was afterward known as old Middleport. An Indian village of the Pottawatomies was located not far away. They were well received by the Indians and a friendship was established and a fur trade was carried on. Later, perhaps about the year 1825, he established a trading post about one-half mile north of the present site of Iroquois.

### ROMANCE.

Like many others, who found themselves beyond the limits of civilization and among savages, Colonel Hubbard deemed it prudent to cement his friendship with the Indians by marrying an Indian woman, according to Indian custom. For a wife he selected Watch-e-kee, a niece of the Pottawatomie chief, Tamin. Writing of this circumstance he says, "I have no wish to deny the fact of her being my wife, given me by her uncle when she was about ten, in the place of his own grown daughter whom he presented to me, and whom I declined. This little girl was to take her place, and was, under my pledge to make her my wife, brought to me by her mother at the age of fourteen or fifteen." She was dignified and intelligent, and declined to mingle with the common herd of redskins, and was anxious to learn the

manners and customs of her more favored pale faced sisters. Her complexion was light, and her form was small, lithe, slender and comely. By this marriage Hubbard greatly strengthened his relations with the Indians, and secured their favor and protection. He acquired unbounded influence with them and it is known that he placed more reliance on the fidelity and friendship of the Pottawatomie chief, Was-saus-suk, than on that of any white man.

But by the influx of the white population Hubbard found himself confronted with the alternative of divorcing his Indian wife or losing caste with his own race. His choice was as most men of his time would have been. He has said that she was a constant delight, and that it was not done without a struggle between affection and expediency. He says, "Our separation was by mutual agreement, in perfect friendship, and because I was about to abandon trade, and of course my connection with her tribe. Both thought each other's happiness would be promoted by the separation."

This Indian girl was born near the present site of the village of Iroquois about the year 1810. After her separation from Mr. Hubbard she married his friend, Noel Vasseur, who remained in charge of the trading post at Iroquois. After her tribe left for the West, she located near the present site of Council Bluffs, Iowa. It is recorded that about the year 1863 she returned to Illinois to visit Mr. Vasseur and then on foot she journeyed to Iroquois County to visit the scenes of her girlhood. "Sadly she left, as the last Pottawatomie to set foot on the soil of Iroquois County."

### INDIAN STORY.

Another story which is said to have been related to Mr. Hubbard by the Indians, not only explains why the name "Iroquois" became associated with the river and county, but gave origin of the name Watseka. Many years ago the Iroquois attacked an Indian village situated on the banks of the river a few miles below the old county seat, Middleport, and drove out the occupants with great slaughter. The fugitives were collected during the night time some distance away, lamenting their disaster. A woman, possessing great courage, urged the men to return and attack the Iroquois, saying that the latter were then rioting in the spoils of the village and exalting over their victory; that they would not expect danger from their defeated enemy, and that darkness of the night would prevent their knowing the advance made upon them.

The warriors refused to go. The woman then said that



she would raise a party of squaws and return to the village and fight the Iroquois; and adding that death or captivity would be the fate of the women and children on the morrow, and that they might as well die in an effort to regain their village and property as to submit to a more dreadful fate. She called for volunteers and the women came forward in great numbers. Seeing the bravery of their squaws, the men were ashamed of their cowardice and became inspired with desperate courage. A plan of attack was speedily executed. The Iroquois taken entirely by surprise, were utterly defeated. The heroine of this story is said to have borne the name of Watch-e-kee, and that in honor of her bravery, the tribe or council decreed that at her death the name "Watch-e-kee" should be bestowed upon the most accomplished maiden of the tribe, and thus from one generation to another. The name "Watseka" has been woven into the legends of the county and perpetuated in the name of the county seat.

#### EARLY TRAILS.

Transportation and distribution of the commodities of life is as essential to the well being of man, as production. Mr. Hubbard writes, "During the year 1822, I had established a direct path or track from Iroquois post to Danville and now, 1824, extended it south from Danville and north to Chicago, thus fully opening "Hubbard's Trail" from Chicago to a point about one hundred fifty miles south of Danville." Hubbard's Trail afterward came to be known as State Road. It is said from this circumstance, "State Street" Chicago received its name.

#### COUNTIES.

When Illinois was admitted as a state in 1818, there were but fifteen organized counties within its territory. Iroquois County at that time was a part of Crawford County. As new counties were organized from the larger territories, Iroquois County was successively a part of Clark, then Edgar, then Vermilion counties. Mr. Hubbard was elected to the General Assembly in 1832-34 as a representative from Vermilion County, and it was largely through his efforts that the act was passed creating Iroquois County. At that time the boundaries extended farther to the north and west embracing what is now a part of Kankakee and Will counties, the territory being taken off at the time of the organization of those counties.



The act authorizing the organization of Iroquois County was passed February 26, 1833, but the first election was not held until February, 1834, and county officials elected. The first meeting of county commissioners was held March 17, 1834, in the dwelling house of Robert Hill near Milford, and that became the temporary seat of county government.

### COUNTY SEAT.

The question of the location of the county seat was for thirty some years a disputed question and was a subject of discussion in successive campaigns before it was finally located at the present location in 1865. In 1837 a tract of twenty acres was secured and conveyed to the county commissioners near what was then known as Montgomery, but the new site was named Iroquois. But because of the division of sentiment, Iroquois remained as the seat of government but a short time and no buildings were erected on the site that had been secured. In 1839 the seat of justice was moved to Middleport. and there a jail and court house was erected. For a long time the county seat fight between Middleport and Watseka was a question of interest and it was not finally settled until after the T., P. & W. Railroad was established.

One Micajah Stanley was interested in Watseka and made a proposition to the railroad company and secured the right-of-way for Watseka. This was the final determining factor and in 1865, the county seat was located at Watseka where it has since remained.

### TOWNSHIPS.

Formerly Sheldon Township was a part of Concord Township and the earlier history was connected with territory now in these two townships. In the earlier day when the ox team was the rule and distant markets a necessity, the now much lauded prairie was literally a desert waste without habitation, and remained so until a much later date. The friendly shelter of the forest, skirting the neighboring streams, that furnished material for the log houses, and fuel for the fireplaces, attracted the settlers, so we find all the earlier settlements along the timbered water courses of our county.

As early as 1826, Mr. Hubbard pre-empted a tract of land and inclosed and cultivated 80 acres. He had a farmer by the name of Allen Baxter, who after the first year returned to Indiana and brought his bride to the new settlement. It

is claimed that Mrs. Baxter was the first white woman who located in Iroquois County. The land that was pre-empted by Mr. Hubbard was not entered until 1831. The land office was not easily available at an earlier date. So it is quite probable that some of the earlier settlers occupied the land as "squatters" some few years before the date of regular entry which is of record was made. This fact may account for some confusion in dates that occur in some instances.

William H. Dunning and Benjamine F. Fry are recorded as the first permanent settlers of Concord Township.

### FIRST CORN.

It is recorded that Mr. Fry produced the first corn for the market during the season of 1830. This was produced on the Hubbard farm and was husked during the winter of 1830-31. In the spring the crop was loaded on a flat boat, and accompanied by a half breed named Joe Babee. Mr. Fry took the corn to Chicago, by the way of the Iroquois, Kankakee and DesPlaines rivers and the Chicago swamp. The corn was delivered at Fort Dearborn, which with a few shanties, constituted the city.

### FIRST TOWNS.

Montgomery, the one ancient sentinel of the Iroquois whose early struggles were witnessed by the noble red man of the forest, secured the position of first among the pioneer towns of the county. It was surveyed on the south side of the river in May, 1835. Dr. Timothy Locey was the first tavern keeper in Montgomery, having started as early as 1831. Mrs. Locey was a tasty, punctilious landlady; if her guests did not order their behavior and proceedings to her pleasure, even to cutting the butter straight at the table, she would promptly notify them of their misdemeanor.

Concord was surveyed on the north side of the river, and opposite to Montgomery. In 1830 Benjamine Fry, George Courtright, William Courtright, the widow McCullah and her two sons, William and Solomon, Hezekiah Eastburn and Ruben Critchfield were residents of Concord Township. The first marriage took place October, 1832. the contracting parties being George Courtright and Agnes Newcomb. The license was procured at Danville and the marriage was in an old log house, located on what was afterward known as the Wright farm.

William L. Eastburn was probably the first white child



born in Concord Township, and Iroquois County. The date of birth was February 22, 1836.

It is highly probable that Jesse Eastburn and family made the first settlement in the present limits of Sheldon Township. He was a native of Maryland, and was born in the year 1770. The exact date of settlement is questioned, but he settled in the timber on Section Five, where he built a mansion 18x20 feet of unhewn logs. The cracks were plastered with mud. A stick chimney reared up at the end, a little quaint door, and one window, and an oak clapboard roof completed the house, near which stood the well-sweep with the "old oaken bucket that hung in the well." The well was curbed with the gums of an old sycamore tree.

Next and probably early in 1834, came William Lister on Section Six in a point of timber that bears his name. In addition to the farm he conducted a blacksmith shop, it being the first in this part of the county. He was a native of Tennessee. Next came Samuel Jones, a native of Kentucky, in 1834.

Zedic Parks, a native of Coshocton County, Ohio, was one of the first to venture to settle on the prairie. He pitched his tent on the road leading from Lafayette to Chicago, via Iroquois, at a point about one-third of a mile northeast of the present railroad crossing in Sheldon. He was engaged in keeping a hotel, which was probably conducted on the "corn bread and common doings style." He also did some farming; but he was of the migratory character, and soon moved back to the timber, and later,

"Folded his tent like the Arab,  
And as silently stole away."

In the year 1852, Robert and Isaac Caldwell settled on the prairie about two miles southwest of the present site of Sheldon.

Midst all their trials and privations, the early settlers had their joys and woes. As early as August, 1836, death invaded the settlement, and called Rebecca, daughter of William Lister, from earthly care. To this family also is credited the first birth within the limits of Sheldon Township, that of Thomas Lister, April 15, 1837. An early birth was that of Parker T. Eastburn, November 20, 1838. The first marriage within the limits of this township occurred August 19, 1860, the parties being David Mathews and Catharine Robbins; the knot was tied by Robert Caldwell, who was also the first Justice of the Peace.

## MUCH NAMED VILLAGE.

Our neighboring village that now bears the name Iroquois has been a much named community, being first known as Montgomery on the south side of the river and Concord on the north side. It early received the designation "Bunkum" by an unrecorded incident that has been quite commonly reported as tradition and evidently has some foundation in fact for the traditional name has tenaciously held down to the present time.

## INCIDENTS.

Probably with all earlier settlements are associated amusing incidents and little stories, in which names of pioneers of their respective localities appear. Here is one from Concord Township, illustrative of the mettle of the pioneers. Mr. Benjamine Fry is the character. He settled here in 1830, when the Indians were quite numerous. They had a camp close to Mr. Fry's home. They had many dogs, and sometimes the dogs made attacks on Mr. Fry's hogs, until as a last resort, Mr. Fry took to shooting the offending canines, and sometimes followed them into the Indian camp to exact his vengeance. This unflinching bravery won for him the praise of the Indians, and the squaws gave him the title of "Heap Brave." And as a mark of respect for him, or for fear of their dogs, would always shoulder their dogs when passing his residence and carry them until they were at a safe distance away.

## WEATHER.

Micajah Stanley reports, "That the winter of 1830-31 was the hardest I ever experienced in my life. We were destitute of almost everything. In the early part of the winter, in December, a snow fell ten inches deep on the level, and there came a rain and formed a crust on that. It created such a crust that a dog could run anywhere over it. The snow drifted some places until it was six or seven feet deep. That fall we had plenty of wild turkeys, but the winter was so severe that they were all frozen; and we had plenty of deer; the dogs and wolves killed a great many of them; we could find plenty of carcasses afterwards. The deer were not all killed, and we soon had plenty of them again, but we had no more wild turkey after that winter."



## WINTER 1836.

In December, 1836, occurred the most remarkable change of weather ever recorded. Early in the day nearly a foot of snow lay on the ground. The air turned warm and a slow rain set in and continued several hours, causing a heavy fog. There was a thaw, and in a little while a slush was all over the surface, and the streams were out of their banks. Men were laboring with their coats off. About four o'clock in the afternoon a black cloud appeared in the west, and in a few minutes overspread the sky. A gale of wind sharp and piercing, came sweeping over the prairies, and almost instantly the face of the country was a solid sheet of ice. The water that everywhere covered the ground froze sufficiently in five minutes to bear a man. Some asserted that the strong wind blew the water into waves which froze as they stood.

This sudden change occasioned a tragedy in the western part of the county. A Mr. Thomas Frame and James Hildreth were returning from a trip to Danville on horseback. When they were overtaken by the blast and were endangered they dismounted, and one of the horses was killed and they tried to warm themselves from the heat of the body. But Mr. Frame was frozen to death and his companion had a narrow escape. He lost the toes from both of his feet and most of his fingers. The experiences of that day was a topic of conversation throughout the lives of those of that generation.

## TRAGEDY.

The early history was not without tragedy. As early as 1836, crime lifted its bloody form in this part of the county. One Charles Lagree, a blacksmith of Chicago was killed by Joseph Thomas, who also bore the alias of Joseph F. Morris, also, Joseph F. Norriss. He was tried before Judge Ford, (afterward Governor Ford) and was condemned to death and was hanged on a tree on the north bank of the Iroquois, June 10, 1836.

In July, 1862, at a dance held in Iroquois for the 76th Regiment, a man by the name of Landen, a resident of Middleport, had a huckster stand. There was present a Mr. John Anderson. There was some difficulty and Mr. Landen ran and Anderson gave chase, and Landen was afterward found stabbed from which effects he died. Anderson was tried but was cleared for want of prosecution.

Again in May, 1877, Iroquois was the scene of a bloody affray. Charles Pinkerton killed Samuel Kelly. Pinkerton

was working for Kelly in a livery stable. Pinkerton and others were on a spree and became noisy and Kelly tried to quiet them. Kelly was stabbed. Pinkerton served three years in the penitentiary for the crime.

There were also other tragedies in other parts of the county. One resulting in a lynching of a man from near Onarga for having whipped his son to death. The lynching occurred in the evening and the body was left hanging in a tree near the highway. Later in the evening a party of travelers camped nearby, not knowing what had taken place earlier in the evening. In the light of the next morning they discovered the body of the man hanging in the tree. Fearing lest they be accused of the crime or that they might be the next victims they hastily broke camp and were on their way without their breakfast.

### SHELDON.

The Toledo, Peoria and Warsaw Railroad was completed in the winter of 1859-60. In January, 1860, a switch was placed and received the name "Sheldon" for one of the officials of the railroad company. The winter of 1859-60 was also known as the cold winter. But it was during that winter that Messrs. Sherman and Smith put up a small shed and a pair of scales and began buying grain; this was the first business enterprise in Sheldon. Probably the first goods shipped into the switch was five carloads of lumber to Mr. Jacob Wingard, who was improving his farm about one mile south.

Mr. William B. Fleager was the first station agent. He was sent here from Gilman by the railroad company and at first found a boarding place at the home of William Bussert, who lived about three quarters of a mile north. He remained there only a short time for it proved too difficult for him to get back and forth on account of the water. It is reported that at times the water came above the top of his hip-boots. So he concluded to "batch it." A box car was secured and was used as a residence, depot and freight house. Mr. Fleager afterward built the first residence, the style being two houses, 14x20, one placed two feet behind the other.

In 1860, the county surveyor, a Mr. Meser, surveyed the village of Sheldon, the plat consisting of ten acres along the railroad and about 200 lots around the same. The land belonged to Honorable Judge Chamberlain and James Lawrence. The lots were priced from \$25 to \$75. The first two lots were bought by William Fleager upon which he erected



a store building and occupied it as a grocery store. Later he received the appointment as postmaster. the first in Sheldon. A Dr. Barry was the first physician to locate here. Dock Brandon opened the first blacksmith shop in 1862. The village was incorporated December 26, 1871. The Cincinnati, Lafayette, and Chicago Railroad came through in 1871.

### SHELDON TOWNSHIP.

It was not until 1868 that Sheldon Township was organized as a separate township. The following were the officers chosen at the first election held in April, 1868. Supervisor L. B. Brown; Town Clerk, D. W. Ayers; Assessor, Parker T. Eastburn; Tax Collector, Owen King; Magistrates, Robert Caldwell and D. W. Ayers. Thus all the earlier history of Sheldon Township was a part of Concord Township.

### SCHOOLS.

Oliver P. Bookless taught the first school in the present limits of Sheldon Township, as early as 1850. It was a subscription school, it was conducted in an old log house, originally built by Jesse Eastburn as a chicken house, but was renovated and made to serve as a school room. It is said that there were not more than a half dozen families in the community. Another early instructor was Charles B. Harrington, who taught as early as 1857. Mrs. Elizabeth Waity furnished the building and taught a three months term for \$40. The first school house to be erected in the limits of Sheldon Township was Number Nine (Possum Trot) in 1859 and Sarah Darrough was the first teacher.

### RELIGION.

Circuit riders, or itinerate preachers, appeared with the earlier settlers; they rode on horseback and carried their Bibles in saddle bags; services were held in homes of the settlers. In the earlier days these visits were at several weeks' intervals. As time went on more frequent services were held in school houses, and then the building of churches.

The pioneer preacher was a product of pioneer conditions, and he adapted himself to the life of the people about him. Seldom was he a scholar or logician. He appealed directly to the emotions and lived and worked on a level with his people. He gave beautiful word pictures of heaven and the

awfulness of hell. Sometimes their sermons would turn on matters of controversy, arguing with little learning but much fervor, on free grace, baptism, free-will, sanctification or final perseverance of the saints and other ontroverted subjects. They were long distant speakers and often the sermons were from one and one-half hours to two hours in length. It is said that the sermons were tested in three ways, its length, the flowery, ornate language and the vigor of action in delivery. But there was every evidence of conviction and consecration.

### UNITED BRETHREN.

The United Brethren ministers were in the vanguard. Rev. Frederick Kenoyer, Rev. Jacob Kenoyer, Rev. D. Brown, a Rev. Kite, and Rev. John Dollarhide being some of the earlier ministers. Possibly as early as 1834 or 35 the Rev. Frederick Kenoyer came and preached in the homes of the pioneers and later in school houses. He organized what was afterward known as the Eastburn Church, although for a number of years services were held in school houses, regular services being maintained in the West Union school house for a number of years. Revs. Jacob Kenoyer, William Pentzer, Joel Cowgill, R. F. Edmondson, W. N. Coffman being some of the earlier ministers.

A United Brethren Church was organized in the Enslin school house about one mile south of Iroquois about the year 1850, by Jacob Kenoyer and this school house served as a meeting house until the winter of 1875, when the present building was erected in Sheldon at a cost of \$2500. N. Pinard was the contracting carpenter, and O. King, Nelson Waity and Frank Webster were the trustees of the church who signed the contract for the building. The church was dedicated by Rev. J. W. Hott, who at that time was Missionary Secretary of the denomination. Rev. M. Cheadle was one of the first ministers in the new building.

Thus the pioneers with all their struggles had time and disposition to give themselves to religious services. These churches were not only established and given unto us as an inheritance, but they gave us an example of devotion and religious fervor. These inheritances are more valuable than those represented in houses and lands. It is up to the present generation to carry on, and with all the increased opportunities, we should show something of like devotion and earnestness and to pass on to succeeding generations a like example.



## AMUSEMENTS.

The pioneers were not without their amusements. Skating and sleighing were common forms of invigorating exercise in the winter season. Then there were house raisings, quiltings and other neighborhood gatherings.

## CORN HUSKINGS.

In earlier times the corn was not husked from the stalk as it is at the present time, but was pulled from the stalk and taken home in the husk and thrown in a heap, generally beside the crib. The whole neighborhood, male and female, was invited to the shucking as it was called. The girls and many of the married women had a part in the amusing work, or play as it was made to be. In the first place two leaders were chosen, and the corn divided into equal parts. Each leader chose one alternately as his helpers, male and female, until all present were selected on one side or the other, and then the contest began, one side seeking to beat the other. In many cases the contest was quite exciting. One rule was that whenever a man found a red ear of corn, he was entitled to kiss the girl of his choice. This frequently excited much fun and scuffling which was intended by both parties to end up with a kiss.

## FIRST LOG CABINS.

The earliest cabins were built of rough unhewn logs, the cracks were filled with clay. The roof was covered with thatch or clapboards held in place by poles laid on top. Nails were unknown. The floor was laid with puncheon (split logs) or split bark. Holes were bored in logs and wooden pins were placed for shelves for kitchen utensils, clothing and bedding. Beds were made in the same way. Home-made beds and chairs were common. The settlers were skilled in preparing elm and hickory bark which they wove into chair seats. In the same way they made baskets, and muzzles for horses to keep them from eating the growing corn when plowing. The fireplaces were made by laying slabs of rock. Chimneys were built by using sticks instead of bricks. Clay filled the chinks and held the sticks together and the inside of the chimney was daubed with clay. Fireplaces were made large and in winter time a great roaring fire was a necessary and cheerful part of the pioneer life. A door made of puncheon, hung on wooden hinges served as a place of entrance. Windows were small, at first

there was but one window, and greased paper served as window panes, glass was a luxury that came later. Tables were made of slabs supported by pegs driven into auger holes. Snow and rain could not be kept out and many a morning when the pioneer and his family awakened, they found their beds covered with snow. In the earlier cabins cooking was done on fireplaces, the cooking utensils consisted of a heavy iron teakettle, a skillet, a coffee pot and possibly a boiling pot. These were placed over coals of fire in the fireplace, supported by pieces of stone or andirons, and occasionally a crane would be built into a fireplace, and on this pots would swing. Here food was prepared for strong men who had the world's work to do. Venison, pork, squirrel, wild turkey, potatoes baked in ashes, corn pone, home-made hominy and coffee had a place in the menu.

### THE WOMEN.

The women of that day corresponded well with that description of the virtuous women given in the last chapter of Proverbs. They sought wool and flax and worked diligently with their hands. They did not, it is true, make themselves coverings of tapestry. Nor could it be said of them that their clothing were of silk and purple; but they arose while it was yet night; and gave meat unto their households and ate not the bread of idleness. They laid their hands to the spindle and distaff, and strength and honor was in their clothing. They were contented and even happy without any of the elegant articles of dress. Many of them were grown before they ever saw inside of a well furnished dry goods store.

### LARGE FAMILIES.

One of the characteristics of the early day was the large family. Small families were an exception. It was not uncommon before 1860 to find families of ten to fifteen children. From six to eight was an average family. The earlier settlers who came from the older states or from Europe were a vigorous lot of people. The weaker element had not the courage or the initiative to face the dangers and trials of frontier travel and settlement. The people lived largely an outdoor life. They lived in a day in which insipid breakfast foods, cold storage eatables, and destructive delicacies were unknown. The cost of rearing children was not great. There was an abundance of work at hand and children were a good investment. Land was plentiful and cheap and the



chances for children to acquire farms and a competency were good. In fact parents could look forward to the rearing of large families with far less anxiety than in such a social and industrial condition as now prevails.

### SUMMARY.

Much progress has been made in the passing years. The cabins have been replaced with palatial homes; the tallow candles have been succeeded by the electric light that has made the night as light as day; the punchoon floors have been converted into quarter-sawed oak or coverings of tapestry; the rude home-made furniture to such as only graced the homes of the very wealthy of that day; the ox cart and covered wagon is only a record of the past; the horse and buggy, which was an evidence of wealth a few years ago, is now in discard as much too slow; the automobile has conquered distance and made the more remote places near neighbors; the airplane is fast making new conquests and making it possible for men to girdle the earth in a few days of time. The streams have been spanned with great structures of steel and cement, and the bypaths of that day have been superceded by the lines of pavement that lead to every city and village. The loom and the spinning wheel are no longer, save the few that have been preserved as antiques. Spinning, weaving, knitting and even sewing are lost arts. The wooden mouldboard plows have given place to the two and three-bottomed plows that are drawn by tractor power; the scythe, the reap-hook, the cradle, the flail have given place to the mower, the binder, the combine. The ladies no longer use the side-saddle or ride behind. The panting deer and the howling wolf have given way to the domestic animals that may be seen on every hand in countless numbers and adding life and beauty and grandeur to the great prairies that have been made to blossom as the rose. The civilization of a hundred years, even fifty years ago, has passed. Their task was to bring the wilderness country into subjection; they suffered with malaria from the swamps; they fought back the wolf from the doors; they had their virtues and their vices; they served well their day and generation. All honor to their names and peace to their memories.

They have given us an inheritance rich in courage and faith. We who have lived through the last half century have witnessed the most marvelous progress in the history of time. We have new questions to face and new problems to solve. Theirs were the questions of frontier life, but it is ours to carry on with a more compact population and con-

gested cities. It is our problem to find employment for hands that have been made idle by the completion of pioneer tasks, and the coming of new and improved machinery, and to occupy the minds that no longer have the necessity to think through the questions that occupied them in past days.

The younger generations, those who are now in high schools and colleges, have tremendous responsibilities, but wonderful opportunities. It is a mistaken notion to think that the day of opportunity is passed. The days of greatest opportunities are just ahead; they need to be thought out and forged out. It is ours to work out a new economic system that will be just to all and provide for the needs of the many. There is something vastly more important than bridge parties and ball games to occupy the minds of the present generation.

An epoch of civilization has passed; a new one is in the making. We are hoping for a bloodless revolution or a rapid evolution into a new era of privilege and responsibility. Civilization is in a liquid state now and no one knows what the crystalization is going to be. May those of the present generation apply themselves as faithfully to the questions of the present time and those just ahead and be equally earnest and persevering as were our forebears in their time.

When another century is passed and our bones have crumbled to dust and other generations are reading of the events of these passing days, may they find records of worthwhile achievements in this day and generation.



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